



**Laura Bush**  
**21<sup>st</sup> Century Librarian Program**

**FY2015 Technical Field  
Reviewer Handbook**

**For additional information, contact:**

Mary Alice Ball at (202) 653-4730 [mball@imls.gov](mailto:mball@imls.gov)

Sandra Toro at 202- 653-4662 [storo@imls.gov](mailto:storo@imls.gov)

Tim Carrigan at (202)-653-4639 [tcarrigan@imls.gov](mailto:tcarrigan@imls.gov)

Emily Reynolds at (202) 653-4665 [ereynolds@imls.gov](mailto:ereynolds@imls.gov)

## **THE LAURA BUSH 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY (LB21) LIBRARIAN PROGRAM GRANTS REVIEW PROCESS**

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a Laura Bush 21<sup>st</sup> Century Librarian Grant technical field reviewer. We have selected you to review this year's applications because of your expertise in one of the competitive categories of funding for libraries and archives.

The staff at the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) has prepared this handbook to ensure fair and candid review of all eligible applications. It will provide you with the procedural information you need. Please use it in conjunction with this year's *Laura Bush 21<sup>st</sup> Century Librarian Program Notice of Funding Opportunity* available on our website at: [http://www.ims.gov/applicants/lb21\\_guidelines\\_2015.aspx](http://www.ims.gov/applicants/lb21_guidelines_2015.aspx)

Even if you have reviewed for other IMLS programs in the past you should read through this booklet since we make changes each year that may impact your reviews.

### **PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF LAURA BUSH 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY LIBRARIAN PROGRAM**

The Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program (LB21) invests in the nation's information infrastructure by funding projects designed to address the education and training needs of the professionals who help build, maintain, and provide public access to the world's wide-ranging information systems and sources. It provides Federal grants through an annual, competitive process.

In 2015, the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program will support projects to develop faculty and library leaders, recruit and educate the next generation of librarians and archivists, conduct research, build institutional capacity in graduate schools of library and information science, and assist in the professional development of librarians and archivists. This grant program is especially interested in developing information professionals who can help manage the burgeoning data generated by the nation's researchers, serve as stewards of the nation's cultural legacy, and meet the information needs of the underserved. The program also seeks to help librarians develop the information and digital literacy of their communities, as well as other critical skills their users will need to be successful in the 21st century.

This program addresses the field's need to conduct research on the library and information science profession. It also seeks to advance the work of new faculty in library and information science by supporting an early career development program for untenured, tenure-track faculty. Research conducted under the early careers program should be in the faculty member's particular research area and is not restricted to research on the profession.

In the LB21 program:

- Applications are evaluated by peers;
- Evaluations are based on the application's strength in proving that the applicant:
  - Demonstrates impact as defined in the *LB21 Notice of Funding Opportunity*;
  - Meets applicable evaluation criteria as outlined in the *LB21 Notice of Funding Opportunity*;
  - Addresses one of the categories for this funding cycle as explained in the *LB21 Notice of Funding Opportunity*; and
  - Aligns with IMLS strategic goals.

## APPLICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

1. Applicants review the *Laura Bush 21<sup>st</sup> Century Librarian Program Notice of Funding Opportunity* and submit proposals to IMLS.
2. IMLS receives the grant applications, checks them for eligibility and completeness.
3. IMLS identifies a pool of technical field reviewers and assigns qualified professionals to evaluate each application.
4. Technical field reviewers evaluate the applications and submit comments using the IMLS Online Reviewer System.
5. If necessary, IMLS will host a conference call to discuss those proposals that received significant variance in reviewer evaluations.
6. IMLS processes technical field reviewer comments and scores, and ranks the applications. The ranking will be used to determine which applications are sent to the overview panel.
7. Overview panelists meet in person to consider recommended proposals and make funding recommendations.
8. IMLS Director makes final funding decisions.
9. IMLS staff notifies successful applicants.
10. IMLS provides feedback to all applicants.

## HOW YOUR REVIEWS ARE USED

Your comments and scores as a technical field reviewer are an important part of this process. They will provide the basis for the overview panel review, directing panelists to the strengths and weaknesses of an application, and helping both panelists and IMLS staff determine which proposals are both highly innovative and offer broad potential impact.

If a panel-reviewed application is not funded, your review comments and panel comments assist the applicant in revising their application for future submission. Applicants whose proposals are

not ranked highly enough for panel review will only receive your technical field review comments. Unsuccessful applicants often use reviewer comments to improve or revise their applications for resubmission.

## APPLICATION REVIEW INSTRUCTIONS

### VERIFY ACCESS TO APPLICATIONS ONLINE

You will use two online systems:

1. **Dropbox:** An online file sharing system used to download proposals and supporting materials.
2. **IMLS Online Review System:** A system to enter your evaluative comments and scores for each proposal.

You will receive information about how to access these systems via email from IMLS staff. Please alert IMLS staff immediately if any applications are missing or you cannot open them.

### TIME REQUIRED

Experienced reviewers estimate that it takes two to three hours to evaluate one application. If you are a first time reviewer you may need more time. We recommend the reviewing process outlined on the following pages.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Before we assigned proposals for you to read, we provided you a list of applicants and asked you to identify any conflicts of interest. Once you begin reviewing your assigned applications, if you discover any previously unidentified potential conflict, contact us immediately. Please see the Reviewer Conflict of Interest Statement included as **Appendix I** of this handbook. A conflict of interest would arise if you have a financial interest in whether or not the proposal is funded, or if for some reason, you feel that you cannot review it objectively.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

The information contained in grant applications is strictly confidential. Do not discuss or reveal names, institutions, project activities or any other information contained in the applications. Contact IMLS if you have any questions concerning an application—do not contact an applicant directly.

## READING APPLICATIONS

Your thorough reading and understanding of each application will be the key to providing both insightful comments and an overall rating for the application. In advance of doing so, reread the LB21 Notice of Funding Opportunity at

[http://www.imls.gov/applicants/lb21\\_guidelines\\_2015.aspx](http://www.imls.gov/applicants/lb21_guidelines_2015.aspx)

The below section “Evaluating Applications” is one you may wish to print and place in your workspace. It lists the types of information you should look for in each applicant’s responses and should serve as guideposts for your review.

### APPLICATION COMPLETENESS

Check your applications to make sure that all required information is included. There are page limits on certain sections (10 pages for Narrative, 2 pages for each resume) and IMLS truncates submissions that run longer. *If any application appears to be incomplete beyond these circumstances, contact IMLS immediately.*

## EVALUATING APPLICATIONS

### THE ONLINE REVIEWER SYSTEM

All reviewers will use the Online Reviewer System to submit their comments and scores. Listed in Appendix II are the general steps for using the Online Reviewer System. *Please note that this is a legacy system that has a number of flaws. We highly recommend that you read these steps before you start.*

Begin by writing comments and scores for proposals in a word processing document for later transfer to the Online Reviewer System. This document will be an invaluable resource in case of system failure. When you have completed assigning scores and giving comments for each application assigned to you, you will submit the entire review to IMLS. It is essential to the review calendar that you complete and submit all reviews by the deadline.

### REVIEW CRITERIA

The IMLS Online Reviewer System will require you to provide summary evaluative comments for each of the review criteria. Please consider the following questions when writing comments.

#### Needs Assessment

- Does the literature review include relevant research and/or projects?
- Does the needs assessment clearly articulate the project audience and its needs?

- Do project activities and goals directly address the needs of the identified audience?
- Is the rationale for this research fully explained?

### **Impact**

- Does the project increase the number of qualified professionals for employment as librarians?
- Does it build greater skills and abilities in the library and archives workforce?
- Will it contribute to results or products that benefit multiple institutions and diverse constituencies?
- Will project outcomes meet library service needs not only in the communities served but also be generalizable to libraries of similar size and type?
- Will this project transform practice? Innovative approaches will be given high consideration.

### **Project Design and Evaluation Plan**

- Are the methodology and design appropriate to the scope of the project?
- Does the proposal clearly articulate research questions and adequately address timeline & personnel?
- Does it include details of sampling logic (size, scope), data collection and analysis methodologies?
- Does the evaluation plan explain how the results are likely to be valid, reliable or generalizable?
- Does the evaluation plan include a description of how the study results will be assessed?

### **Project Resources: Budget, Personnel and Management Plan**

- Are resources appropriate to meet the project goals?
- Do personnel have appropriate experience and will they commit adequate time to the project?
- If the project includes a partnership, is there evidence that all partners are active contributors to and beneficiaries of the partnership activities?

### **Diversity**

- Does the proposal identify the diversity of communities served?
- Does it address the library service needs of those communities, particularly the needs of traditionally underserved groups and/or communities?

## **Communication Plan**

- Will results, products, models, findings, processes, and benefits of this project be communicated effectively to the library field and to other professional organizations and communities?
- Do the communities described in the Needs Assessment section benefit?

## **Sustainability Plan**

- Do the project's benefits continue beyond the grant period?
- For projects involving distance education, do project plans address issues of copyright and use restriction on the course and course content during and after the grant period?
- Are there plans for preservation and maintenance of course and course content during and after the expiration of the grant period?

## **IMLS PRIORITIES FOR LB21**

We are especially interested in supporting proposals to address the following priorities:

- National digital platform
- Learning spaces in libraries
- STEM learning in libraries

During a series of national convenings in 2014, IMLS staff and stakeholders discussed three priorities. Details are available here at [www.imls.gov/news/imls\\_focus.aspx](http://www.imls.gov/news/imls_focus.aspx).

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL LB21 APPLICATIONS**

### **Broad Impact**

Proposals should address key needs and challenges that face libraries and/or archives. The project should show the potential for far-reaching impact, influence practice throughout the library and/or archival communities, and reflect awareness and support of current strategic initiatives and agendas in these fields.

### **Innovation**

The proposal should demonstrate a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter and show how the project has the potential to strengthen and improve library and/or archive services to benefit the audiences and communities being served.

### **Collaboration**

While partnerships are not required, they can help demonstrate a broad need, field-wide buy-in and input, access to appropriate expertise, and sharing of resources.

A good LB21 proposal should:

- Demonstrate impact as defined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity
- Successfully address each criterion
- Address goals for the appropriate category (refer to the Notice of Funding Opportunity)
- Align with the IMLS strategic goals and priorities

## **WRITING COMMENTS**

Reread the evaluation criteria. Draft comments that reflect your judgment for each of the evaluation criteria. Write them in a word processor and then copy and paste into the online review system.

### **GOOD COMMENTS**

Some of the characteristics of good comments are:

- Presented in a constructive manner
- Concise, specific, easy to read and understand
- Specific to the individual applicant
- Reflect the professionalism of the reviewer
- Correlate with the rating that is given
- Acknowledge the resources of the institution
- Reflect the application's strengths and identify areas for improvement

Remember: Successful and unsuccessful applicants use your comments to improve their awards or future applications!

### **POOR COMMENTS**

Comments that are considered poor are vague, irrelevant, insensitive, or unclear. These comments actually hinder the evaluation process rather than help it.

To avoid making poor comments, DO NOT:

- Penalize an applicant because you feel the institution doesn't need the money—remember, any eligible institution may apply for and receive LB21 funds, regardless of need.



- Penalize an applicant because of missing materials, unless you have determined that the materials are missing from the original application. If you are missing required materials, contact IMLS immediately.
- Make derogatory remarks—offer suggestions for improvement rather than harsh criticism.
- Question an applicant’s honesty or integrity. You may question the accuracy of information provided by the applicant; if you are unsure how to phrase your concerns, contact IMLS.

## SCORING APPLICATIONS

After you have finished writing evaluative comments for each section of the proposal, use the section named “Additional Comments” to provide an overall numeric score and to add feedback not tied to a specific evaluation criterion. Please make sure numeric scores are supported by the corresponding evaluative comments. The following rating scale should be used for scoring.

Note: As you assign a numeric score to each proposal:

- Use whole numbers only
- Do not use fractions, decimals, zeros, or more than one number

**Excellent (5)** – The applicant’s response provides excellent support for each of the evaluation criteria through the proposed activities. It strongly demonstrates potential to elevate or provide strategic impact to museum, archival, and library practice within the context of national strategic initiatives. These applications fulfill to the fullest extent the goals of the LB21 program. Use only for the highest quality applications.

**Very Good (4)** – The applicant’s response provides very good support for each of the evaluation criteria through the proposed activities. Some minor flaws exist that are easily fixed. Strategic impact is present, but not exemplary. Use for very strong applications when minor requested changes easily can be made within one week.

**Good (3)** - The applicant’s response provides good/adequate support for each of the evaluation criteria. Limited strategic impact and/ or innovation presented. Projects with a “good” rating have a good idea, but have flaws that need some revising before being funded in this year. Use for applications when more significant requested changes can be made in one week.

**Some Merit (2)** - The applicant’s response provides inadequate support for the proposed activities, however the application shows some merit and should be reworked and resubmitted, taking into consideration recommendations and feedback from the review panel. A rating of

“some merit” indicates the submission is not ready to receive funding, but is based on good ideas or addresses important issues. Use for projects that can be revised and resubmitted to LB21 by this applicant next year.

**Do Not Fund (1)** - The applicant’s responses provide insufficient information for evaluation; projects have major flaws that render them unfundable without major revision or have serious conceptual flaws. The idea itself is not necessarily bad or the issues raised not important, but the application is not fundable by IMLS in the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Grant program. It may be fundable in another IMLS grant category. Use for projects that you do not want to see brought back to LB21 by this applicant.

## RETURNING MATERIALS TO IMLS

Submit final scores for assigned applications no later than the deadline. Please remember to print a copy of each completed review to keep for your files.

You will also receive, via email, a Peer Reviewer Services Agreement and the Direct Deposit Sign-Up form. Please print, complete, scan, and e-mail the forms to Emily Reynolds at [ereynolds@imls.gov](mailto:ereynolds@imls.gov). Honoraria are paid electronically, and the Direct Deposit Sign-Up form must be completed in its entirety, even if a similar form was submitted in a prior year with the identical banking information.

If you have any questions about reviewing, please contact: Mary Alice Ball at (202) 653-4730; Sandra Toro at (202) 653-4662; Tim Carrigan at (202) 653-4639; Emily Reynolds at (202) 653-4665.

## APPENDIX I

### REVIEWER CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

As a reviewer or panelist for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), you may receive for review a grant application that could present a conflict of interest. Such a conflict could arise if you are involved with the applicant institution, or in the project described in the application, as a paid consultant or through other financial involvement. The same restrictions apply if your spouse or minor child is involved with the applicant institution or if the application is presented on behalf of an institution with which you, your spouse, or minor child is negotiating for future employment.

A present financial interest is not the only basis for conflict of interest. Through prior association as an employee or officer, you may have gained knowledge of the applicant that would preclude objective review of its application. Past employment (generally more than five years) does not by itself disqualify a reviewer so long as the circumstances of your association permit you to perform an objective review of the application. If you believe you may have a conflict of interest with any application assigned to you for review, please notify us immediately.

You may still serve as a reviewer even if your institution is an applicant in this grant cycle or you were involved in an application submitted in this grant cycle, as long as you do not review any application submitted by your own institution or any application in which you were involved. However, if you believe that these or any other existing circumstances may compromise your objectivity as a reviewer, please notify us immediately.

If an application presents no conflict of interest at the time you review it, a conflict of interest may still develop later on. Once you have reviewed an application, you should never represent the applicant in dealings with IMLS or another Federal agency concerning the application, or any grant that may result from it.

It is not appropriate, for your purposes or for the purposes of the institutions or organizations you represent, for you to make specific use of confidential information derived from individual applications that you read while you were serving as an IMLS reviewer. In addition, pending applications are confidential. Accordingly, you must obtain approval from IMLS before sharing any proposal information with anyone, whether for the purpose of obtaining expert advice on technical aspects of an application or for any reason.

If you have any questions regarding conflict of interest, either in relation to a specific application or in general, please contact Emily Reynolds, Program Specialist, at [ereynolds@imls.gov](mailto:ereynolds@imls.gov) or (202) 653- 4665.

## APPENDIX II

### HOW TO USE THE IMLS ONLINE REVIEWER SYSTEM

All LB21 reviewers will use the IMLS Online Reviewer System to create and submit reviews. Below are the general steps for using the system. We recommend that you review these steps before you get started. As a reminder, please complete and submit all your LB21 reviews by November 16, 2014.

#### LOGGING IN

To start, go to: <https://e-services.imls.gov/grantapps/reviewers.aspx>

Your login is:                      your **e-mail address** on file with IMLS  
Your current password is:        **password**

When you log on for the first time, you will need to create a new password.

#### ACCESSING THE ONLINE REVIEWER SYSTEM

- Once you have logged into the system, an **E-Review Security Screen** will appear. Read this page and click **OK**.
- After you have created a new password, your review assignment will appear. To access the list of applications, click **VIEW**.
- Before you can begin to review any of the applications, you must complete a Conflict of Interest Statement. If you have no conflicts of interest with any of the applicants on the list, click **SUBMIT CONFLICT OF INTERESTS STATEMENT** (bottom of page) and proceed. If you think that you may have a conflict of interest with an applicant, **do not** check the conflict box. Instead, contact an NLG staff member.
- Now you are ready to begin. Simply click **REVIEW** beside any of the applications.

**Note: We encourage you to record your comments in a Word document, and then cut and paste your text into the IMLS Online Reviewer System.**

#### ENTERING COMMENTS AND SCORES

- **Comments and Scores:** You must submit comments for each **Review Criterion** for each application. Be sure to save each set of comments by clicking **SAVE** before you move onto to the next criterion. You will only need to provide one overall numeric score for each application you are assigning to review. Click **Application Overview** to submit an overall score.
- Note: **Funding Priorities** does not apply. Please ignore this.
- Once you have completed an application review, click the **SAVE & CLOSE** box at the bottom of the screen. This will return you to the **Applications List** and allow you to choose another application to review.

## REVISITING THE ONLINE REVIEWER SYSTEM

- With your e-mail address and your new password, you will be able to re-enter the Online Reviewer System and complete or edit your reviews as often as you wish.
- Once you have logged in, the Security screen will appear again. Click **OK**.
- Once your review assignment appears, click **VIEW** in order to access the **Applications List** and proceed with the review process.

## COMPLETING YOUR ONLINE REVIEWS

- Once you have reviewed all applications assigned to you, the Application Review Status column should read **COMPLETE** beside each application.
- Please **PRINT** each review for your records.
- Once you have completed all your reviews, click **I AM READY TO SUBMIT THIS REVIEW TO IMLS** at the bottom of the screen.

## KEEPING COPIES OF YOUR REVIEWS AND ASSIGNED PROPOSALS

Keep your applications and a copy of your reviews until April 30, 2015 (in case of questions from IMLS staff).

- Maintain confidentiality of all applications that you review.
- After April 30, 2015, destroy or delete all copies of these documents in your possession.

## ONLINE REVIEWER SYSTEM FAQs

### Background

This system was created several years ago with a Microsoft-based platform. While state-of-the-art at the time of development, it has not been updated. The system still works, but it can be frustrating at first. Once you have a few reviews underway it should prove an efficient process for managing and submitting your reviews. Below are some common user questions.

### Do any of the buttons for assistance work? What if I forget my password?

No. Please contact IMLS staff for help if you need your password reset or have any other problems.

### What is the best way to get started or comfortable with the system?

Shortly after receiving your packet, try logging into the system and entering some practice remarks to get a feel for the set up and information display. Then, as your deadline approaches, you can focus on the substance of your reviews rather than the process of entering information. Test out the system early and try to do it between 9:00am and 5:00pm so we are available to assist you.